

Geographic Review Panel 3 – American River/Eastside Tribes

Proposal number: 2001-H210 **Short Proposal Title:** Lower American River Science

1. Applicability to CALFED ERP Goals and Implementation Plan and CVPIA priorities, and relevance to ERP and CVPIA priorities for your region. This Panel agrees with the Staff Review that the proposed project is potentially highly applicable, but since the project is really yet to be defined it is premature to say.

2. Linkages/coordination with previously funded projects or other restoration activities in your region. The project is linked with the previously funded phase of this project. The linkage to other ongoing restoration efforts in the lower American River is potentially high, but without further details on the project it is not possible to judge the value of the linkages.

3. Feasibility, especially the project's ability to move forward in a timely and successful manner. Since the hypotheses to be tested are not defined, it is impossible to tell if the testing is feasible.

4. Qualifications of the applicants and others involved in implementing the proposed project. The scientific participants and collaborators are agency biologists and consultants of varying ability and accomplishment. Without an appropriately detailed proposal, the Panel is not prepared to comment on the qualifications of the applicants.

5. Local involvement (including environmental compliance). This is definitely the strong point of the proposal.

6. Cost. Since the project is not defined, it is impossible to tell whether the costs are reasonable.

7. Cost sharing. Substantial, but likely less than claimed. A significant portion seems to be associated with modifying outlets at Folsom Dam, which the Panel had a hard time associating with the proposed project.

8. Additional comments. The individual reviewers and the TARP rated this proposal as "fair." The three proposed tasks, each described in one or two paragraphs, are: (1) "refine hypotheses and develop research protocols, including metrics;" (2) "intensive monitoring to test hypotheses;" and (3) "analyze monitoring results and incorporate into adaptive management decisions." This is unacceptable. A large amount of work has already been done on the Lower American River, a good portion of it by people associated with this proposal, and there is an enormous literature on the general issues involved, but none of this is reflected in the proposal.

Regional Ranking

Panel Ranking: Medium low

Provide a brief explanation of your ranking:

The Panel recognizes the potential importance of this project. However, the project is too poorly defined to be considered for funding at this time. The proposal needs to include or at least reflect a thorough and thoughtful review of the work that has already been done on the lower American River. The proposal should draw on theses and other studies to identify key hypotheses to be tested, specify the methods by which the testing will be done, and provide good arguments that the methods proposed are up to the task.

The proposal also needs to embody adaptive management, which the current proposal does not. Fundamentally, this means that the applicants need to accept that there is a great deal of scientific uncertainty about what is needed to attain the desired conditions along the lower American River, so that management of the river is inevitably experimental, and needs to be treated as such. Although consensus about how to address uncertainty is useful and desirable, it is not possible to resolve scientific uncertainty simply by achieving consensus among the technical people involved in the project.

The Panel also recognizes that this is a proposal for next-phase funding, and as such would normally be given high priority. The Panel hopes that a fully completed first phase will result in an improved proposal for continuation of this potentially important effort.